

the name of a geographic location other than the true country of origin of the article, the country of origin marking always must appear in close proximity to those words. The document solicited public comments that were to be received on or before January 16, 1996.

Customs has been requested to extend the period of time for comments in order to afford interested parties additional time to study the proposed regulatory changes and prepare responsive comments. Customs believes that it would be appropriate to grant the request. Accordingly, the period of time for the submission of comments is being extended 30 days.

Dated: December 20, 1995.

Stuart P. Seidel,

*Assistant Commissioner, Office of Regulations and Rulings.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

#### 49 CFR Part 571

[Docket No. 95-72, Notice 2]

RIN 2127-AF75

#### Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Extension of Comment Period for a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

**SUMMARY:** This document grants three requests to extend the comment period on an agency proposal to amend the geometric visibility requirements of signal lamps and the rear side marker color, both contained Standard No. 108, Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment. The goal of the proposed amendment is to assist international efforts to harmonize the lighting requirements of continental Europe, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States. A lengthy extension of the comment period is desirable because a large number of governmental and industry parties require time to achieve internal consensus on the usefulness of the NHTSA proposal. The comment closing date is changed from December 26, 1995 to May 16, 1996.

**DATES:** Comments on docket 95-72, Notice 1 must be received on or before May 16, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should refer to the Docket No. 95-72, Notice 1 and be

submitted to: Docket Section, room 5109, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590 (Docket hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Rich Van Iderstine, Office of Safety Performance Safety Standards, NHTSA, telephone (202) 366-5280, FAX (202) 366-4329. Please note that written comments should be sent to the Docket Section rather than faxed to the above contact person.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NHTSA's proposal responded to a petition from the Groupe Travail de Bruxelles 1952 (GTB). GTB is composed of vehicle and lamp manufacturers from Europe, Japan and the United States. GTB is an advisory group for the two organizations operating under the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe that are involved in establishing motor vehicle lighting standards: The Meeting of Experts on Lighting and Light Signaling (GRE) and the Working Party on the Construction of Motor Vehicles (WP29). GTB requested the extension of the comment period, and an extension was supported by similar requests from the American Automobile Manufacturers Association (AAMA) and the Chairman of GRE, Mr. G.J.M. Meekel.

In its comment period extension request, GTB explained the process it was pursuing in its quest for harmonization. GTB submitted its petition to NHTSA concurrently with its proposal to GRE for amendments of the European regulations. NHTSA proposed some of the suggestions in the GTB petition but not others. GTB believes that NHTSA's response has greatly complicated its dealings with several European countries and Japan. Therefore, according to GTB, arriving at a constructive response to NHTSA's NPRM will not be a trivial matter. AAMA cited that a special meeting of GTB to discuss these issues was not scheduled until December 20, 1995 and that any recommendations developed at this meeting could not be acted upon by GRE until its Spring meeting. Mr. Meekel also mentioned GRE's early Spring meeting and the desire for discussions there and submission of comments resulting from that meeting.

It is NHTSA's general policy to deny requests for comment period extensions based on the timing of formal meetings of interested associations. Modern communication technology provides many rapid ways (e.g., fax, teleconferencing, e-mail, etc.) for associations to communicate with members and reach consensus. However, NHTSA believes that GTB's

desire for an extension is motivated by more than the mere mechanics of international communication. NHTSA's proposal did not provide GTB with the easiest path to harmonization. NHTSA understands the difficulty of finding a signal lamp harmonization solution that would benefit U.S. and international vehicle manufacturers while satisfying the concerns of the various regulatory bodies. NHTSA agrees that this first step toward lighting harmonization may be unusually time-consuming if it is to be productive.

The agency wants to elevate international harmonization among its priorities. However, it views a seven month comment period for this notice as a special circumstance and not a precedent for future rulemaking actions regarding harmonization.

After reviewing the situation, NHTSA agrees with the petitioners that additional time is desirable so that GTB may determine the level of flexibility on the part of European authorities for signal lighting harmonization. Accordingly, the agency believes that there is good cause for the extension and that the extension is consistent with the public interest. Based on the above considerations, the agency has decided to extend the comment period until May 16, 1996.

Issued on: December 19, 1995.

Barry Felrice,

*Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.*

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#### 49 CFR Part 571

[Docket No. 95-98-No1]

#### Public Meeting With Manufacturers of School Buses and School Transportation Providers

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** This document announces a public meeting at which NHTSA will seek information from school bus manufacturers, school transportation providers, and other members of the public on issues related to the transportation of school children. NHTSA is also requesting suggestions for actions with respect to NHTSA's regulations and Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) that govern the manufacture of school buses. This document also invites written comments on the same subject.

**DATES:** *Public meeting:* The meeting will be held on February 14, 1996 at 9:00 a.m. Those wishing to make oral presentations at the meeting should contact Charles Hott, at the address or telephone number listed below, by February 2, 1996.

*Written comments:* Written comments may be submitted to the agency and must be received by March 15, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** *Public meeting:* The public meeting will be held at the following location: Tysons West Park Hotel, 8401 West Park Drive, McLean, VA 22102, Tel: (703) 734-2800.

*Written comments:* All written comments (preferably 10 copies) should be mailed to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5109, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Please refer to the docket number when submitting written comments.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Charles Hott, Office of Vehicle Safety Standards, NPS-15, NHTSA, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590 (telephone 202-366-0247, Fax: 202-366-4329).

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Regulatory Reform**

Calling for a new approach to the way Government regulates the private sector, President Clinton asked Executive Branch agencies to improve the regulatory process. Specifically, the President requested that agencies: (1) Cut obsolete regulations; (2) reward agency and regulator performance by rewarding results, not red tape; (3) create grassroots partnerships by meeting with those affected by regulations and other interested parties; and (4) use consensual rulemaking, such as regulatory negotiation, more frequently.

This meeting is one of NHTSA's announced public meetings to create grassroots partnerships with regulated industries and other affected parties that do not deal with NHTSA on a routine basis. By meeting with these groups, NHTSA believes that it can build a better understanding of their needs and concerns. The agency has met with multistage vehicle manufacturers and will meet with other groups which include heavy truck manufacturers, child seat manufacturers, lamp/reflector manufacturers, and small volume manufacturers.

[Note: This list is not all-inclusive and will be expanded.]

NHTSA recognizes that manufacturers who build school buses operate under different conditions than manufacturers

of passenger cars and trucks. In addition, the agency is aware that school transportation providers and school bus manufacturers share a common interest in matters relating to pupil transportation safety. Therefore, the agency has decided to hold a public meeting to listen to the views of these groups and others in order to be better informed of their specific needs. The agency is interested in obtaining their views on how it can improve its regulations that govern the manufacture of school buses. Suggestions should be accompanied by a statement of the rationale for the suggested action and of the expected consequences of that action. Suggestions should address at least the following considerations:

- Administrative/compliance burdens
- Cost effectiveness
- Costs of the existing regulation and the proposed changes to consumers
- Costs of testing or certification to regulated parties
- Effects on safety
- Effects on small businesses
- Eforceability of the standard
- Whether the suggestion reflects a "common sense" approach to solving the problem

Statements should be as specific as possible and provide the best available supporting information. Statements also should specify whether any change recommended in the regulatory process would require a legislative change in NHTSA's authority.

##### **Other Topics of Interest**

In recent years there have been many changes to the Federal requirements for school buses. Many changes to the FMVSSs have occurred. These new requirements include stop arms for all school buses, more emergency exits for most of the larger school buses, performance requirements for wheelchair restraints in school buses, and mirror systems that are performance based instead of design based. Future requirements include head impact protection for small school buses, and may include antilock brake systems for large school buses.

Improvements have been made to the safety of the school bus loading zones. The stop arm and mirror requirements were implemented to reduce the number of loading zone injuries and fatalities. However, changes in clothing style and design have resulted in snagging and dragging injuries to bus occupants departing from the school bus. Most manufacturers have implemented recalls to modify handrail designs.

Pending administrative decision are two rulemaking actions, flammability of

school bus seating and joint strength requirements for maintenance access panels and small school buses.

The agency is interested in your views on how the above regulations and developments have affected school bus safety. Have increased costs of school buses affected the normal replacement cycle for your school buses?

There have also been many changes to the Federal requirements for school bus drivers. School bus drivers are now required to possess a commercial drivers license which requires pre-employment drug tests and random drug and alcohol tests. Staff from the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Motor Carrier Research and Standards will be available to answer questions at the meeting.

##### **Procedural Matters**

The agency intends to conduct the meeting informally so as to allow for maximum participation by all who attend. Interested persons may ask questions or provide comments during any period after a party has completed its presentation, on a time allowed basis as determined by the presiding official. If time permits, persons who have not requested time to speak, but would like to make a statement, will be afforded an opportunity to do so.

The agency is interested in obtaining the views of its customers both orally and in writing. An agenda for the meeting will be made based on the number of persons wishing to make oral presentations and will be available on the day of the meeting.

Those speaking at the public meeting should limit their presentations to 20 minutes. If the presentation will include slides, motion pictures, or other visual aids, please indicate so that the proper equipment may be made available. Presenters should bring at least one copy of their presentation to the meeting so that NHTSA can readily include the material in the public record.

A schedule of participants making oral presentations will be available at the designated meeting room. NHTSA will place a copy of any written statement in the docket for this notice. Participation in the meeting is not a prerequisite for the submission of written comments. NHTSA invites written comments from all interested parties. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

If a commenter wishes to submit certain information under a claim of confidentiality, three copies of the complete submission, including purportedly confidential business information, should be submitted to the Chief Counsel, NHTSA, Room 5219, at

the street address given above, and copies from which the purportedly confidential information has been deleted should be submitted to the Docket Section. A request for confidentiality should be accompanied by a cover letter setting forth the information specified in the agency's confidential business information regulation (49 CFR Part 512.)

All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated above will be considered. Comments will be available for inspection in the docket.

After the closing date, NHTSA will continue to file relevant information in the docket as it becomes available. It is therefore recommended that interested persons continue to examine the docket for new material.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 322, 30111, 30115, 30117, and 30166; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50.

Issued: December 19, 1995.

Barry Felrice,

*Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.*

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